

Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2002
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Dan Iacovelli

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe,
log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org
and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org
and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to
subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the
following sites:

<http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm>
<http://www.icwhen.com/aone/>
<http://a1mag.atari.org>
Now available:
<http://www.atarinews.org>

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
<http://forums.delphiforums.com/m/main.asp?sigdir=atari>

==~==~==

~ Kids Internet-Friendly ~ Xbox On Losing End! ~ JagFest 2K2 News!
~ Nintendo Boss Retiring ~ Copy-proof CDs Cracked ~ GameCube Price Cut!
~ Major Solaris Upgrade! ~ Kazaa Case Collapsing! ~ HighWire News!

- * Wireless Gaming Gains Ground *-
- * E3 Depicts Gaming Console Battles! *-
- * Microsoft Case 4 Years Old, Far From Over? *-

==~==~==

->From the Editor's Keyboard
.....

"Saying it like it is!"

It has to be the weather! For awhile, we thought it was winter again, last weekend. Rain, sleet and snowed graced the area on Saturday. Naturally, my father and brother came up from Maine with their respective dogs, to be with us and our two dogs. What a weekend! At least Sunday the sun re-emerged and the temperatures were nice. We were even able to get out onto the deck for a barbecue.

With the reappearance of the nice weather, things started to improve elsewhere as well. Remember last week I mentioned my three "problem children" at work? Well, two are gone officially, finally. One to go! The red tape that occurs trying to fire someone these days is absolutely insane! The fear of litigation is overwhelming. But, it's basically over and a huge weight lifted from my shoulders.

Well, the long unofficial-start-of-summer holiday weekend is here. Boy, did this spring fly by! But as long as the weather continues to improve, it should be enjoyable. Time to finish getting my remaining plants in the ground after sitting around in this weird cold weather we had. Then I need to get my veggies and get them planted. Then every other spring "ritual" to get ready for outdoor activities! Good thing it's a long weekend!

Just a reminder, since it is Memorial Day weekend, please be sure to celebrate responsibly. If you're going to drink, stay away from behind the wheel of a car. The life you save may be mine!

Until next time...

==~==~==

PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Miranda
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone and Mother Nature has finally decided to warm things up for us a little bit there

in New England.

After the heatwave we had a while back, I was somewhat worried that we'd be simmering by now. Well thank goodness for small favors. Of course, summer isn't even here yet, so there could be a surprise or two in store for us yet.

Switching subjects, I get asked on occasion why I don't talk about <fill-in-the-blank> in my column. The suggested subjects range from Linux to Intel to my choice for dessert.

The fact is that I don't usually feel that most of my opinions are interesting enough. Let's face it... EVERYONE has opinions. Some are informed and well founded, and some are born of any of a multitude of psychological formulations. Whether or not they are founded in fact or fantasy, there are so many opinions out there that are more interesting than most of mine that I normally figure that mine pale in comparison.

Of course, I do rant and rave every so often... usually once a week or so <grin>, but usually aim to make you stop and think more than anything else. It really doesn't matter what you think about, as long as you think. It's a dying art these days, and I figure that if I can get you to exercise that grey matter you might get to like it.

There are, without a doubt, many of you out there who have a more highly developed batch of synapses than I have. And for you, my hope is that you'll follow my lead and get others to exercise the mind-muscle.

And, since I brought it up, I think Linux is an outstanding operating system that's only going to get better, Intel is less insidious than Microsoft (but it's harder to recognize their monopoly), and my favorite dessert is anything that's sweet.

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st Newsgroup
=====

Dan Ackerman posts this about HighWire, the new browser for Atari 16/32 bit computers:

"The HighWire Development Team has released the fourth demonstration package, as always we would like to thank you for your interest and support. At the time of the last release, we promised you some exciting developments. While we believe that we have delivered that in this package, we found ourselves in the same position that we were in last month. That is, with developments accelerating in all directions, new supports and bug fixes being submitted on almost a daily basis. We finally came to a point that we agreed to release at. Although to be honest and to peak your curiosity a bit. The truth of the matter is there are some really fun things coming in the next package and we realized, that unless we got a version out quickly we would be back into a major bug elimination phase. Faced with that situation, we decided that some of the things in this version were just too nice to have locked away for several more weeks and that the best thing would be to get everyone up to the next level. What have we been up to for the last month? As always a quick glance at the history.txt file will give you an idea of the progress that has been made since the last release. Around 900 lines have been added to the history

file, so that will give the most adventurous something to do. However we will try to condense that down a bit in this letter to give you an idea of what has been added.

Although we generally try to avoid pointing any particular team member out, we do need to specifically recognize a couple of team members for their contributions with this update.

HighWire is now Unicode compliant, with many thanks going to team member Rainer Seitel. There are some more details on this below in the section marked 'International Character Set support', And from this editors point of view, this code is a truly great addition to the open source repository of atari code, as well as an exciting addition to HighWire itself. To get an idea of the magnitude of this support open the uni_bics.html file in the HTML folder.

Ralph Lowinski (aka AltF4) has made major improvements across a wide range of functions of HighWire, resulting in greater speed and stability. For his continuing work on HighWire we all own him a debt of gratitude.

A few of the general highlights of this release include more hotkeys, zoom text, improved IMG tag handling, background window scrolling, scrolling via the keyboard... the list goes on. Really improvements have been made throughout the code again. Tables support has been expanded and is more robust, frame handling has been improved again. More 'common' buggy HTML code is supported. And that is only a portion of the improvements.

While we have set a great task before us, our goal is achievable, it will just take time and your support. We can always use more programmers and support on the documentation side of the project always is a critical need. Translation support for more languages would be a great addition to the project as well.

We do feel that we have something here that shows that our platforms need for an open source browser can be obtained. Currently it should not really be classified as a browser, but more of a demonstration of a parsing and rendering engine. This technology is open source, so hopefully with your support it can be the core to many projects on our platform. Not the least of which will be in the future a fully modern web browser. To reach that goal we will need time and the help of community.

Downloads available at <http://highwire.atari-users.net/>

Related developments include the following.

New Layout for the HighWire site thanks to GokMase
New Fontlist v 1.11

New Highwire Users mailing list thanks to atari-users.net

HighWire Development Team
<http://highwire.atari-users.net> "

Grzegorz Pawlik tells Dan:

"That's great! Unicode support is the important thing CAB and all other Atari browsers lacked (forcing sometimes to use weird techniques to display pages properly)...

There is one weird thing: with MagiC 6.2 and NVDI 5.03 on TT it says "Highwire needs SpeedoGDOS or NVDI >= 3!" and exits. I can start it only with SingleTOS. I remember certain problems with the previous version under MagiC (ie. it *sometimes* crashed the whole system when exiting). :-)

I will try to deinstall anything else (leaving just MagiC and NVDI) to check if it isn't caused by some other program running in background."

Edward Baiz tells Greg:

"There is a program that goes with Highwire called FontList. Run this program. It will list all Speedo Fonts you have installed. I would imagine that your problem is that you do not have any installed. Highwire does not use TrueType and other fonts as yet."

Grzegorz replies:

"I have found out that HW4 does *not* recognize NVDI only when the "Kompatibilitat" option in NVDI Kompatibilitat CPX module is switched *on*. When I switched it *off*, HW4 recognized NVDI properly.

So now I could start it without problems with my usual setup and I must say I am impressed! Polish characters are displayed correctly ;) and a lot of problems with HTML rendering that the previous version had are now fixed. Some stayed, though, especially problems with <EMBED> tag which almost always makes HW crash, certain things with <TABLE> cells widths etc. It also seems HW4 still does not support <TD NOWRAP> tag...

I tried opening some Hebrew documents (UTF-8, ISO 8859-8) - although I quickly realised HW4 does not support UTF-8 encoding yet, the Unicode support makes me look into the future with much hope ;-))

So keep up your great work! This will be surely the best piece of software released for Atari platform (when finished). But please take a closer look at the way HW recognizes NVDI presence..."

Hallvard Tangeraas asks about running GFA code:

"I downloaded a MIDI synthesizer editor ("JXEDITOR") a while back and to my surprise ended up with neither the usual .PRG, .APP or .ACC, but a file by the name of "JXEDITOR.GFA" along with 4 ".FNT" files (GEM fonts I presume).

There were no additional program files or docs. But there was an extra folder with what seems to be synthesizer patch data, which is what I want to check out of course.

But how do I run this program? Is it indeed a GFA-BASIC program? I double-clicked it to try to confirm this, expecting a plain ASCII text file with the usual BASIC commands, but no.... it looked like a binary file with lots of strange characters (as with any program), so what is this mystery program? It's pretty small as well: around 27 Kbytes."

Martin Tarenskeen asks Hallvard:

"Where did you find it? I can take a look at it, and compile with my Gfa basic compiler."

Hallvard tells Martin:

Can't remember, but I think it was off the Atari-MIDI mailing list's website.

Anyway, I've uploaded the whole thing here so you can take a look if you want to: http://home.c2i.net/st_hallvard/jxeditor.zip "

Martin tells Hallvard:

"I have tried it and it looks nice. It's an almost exact copy of the PG800 programmer for the Roland JX8P. I modified one or two lines in the source code. (In my version you will see the current directory if you open the file selector, instead of C:\.) I have also added a compiled ready-to-use jxeditor.prg to the archive. This archive can be downloaded from here:

<http://www.home.zonnet.nl/m.tarenskeen/jxeditor.zip>

It's not my intention to keep it there forever. Is anyone willing to adopt it to put it somewhere permanently (Tim (TAMW), are you reading this?)

Tim Conrardy jumps in and tells Martin:

"I did indeed read it, and now I have put it (with credits of course) on the Atari-MIDI archive here:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/atari-midi-archives/files/SOUNDS/Roland/>

This dir is linked to my download page on my site as well.

There is also some other Roland stuff there including 100 sounds for the JX by David Etheridge.

Thank you for your compiling work."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

$$= \sim = \sim = \sim =$$

```
->In This Week's Gaming Section
  """"""""""
  GameCube Price Is Cut!
  E3 Showcases Gaming Battles!
  Wireless Console Gaming?!
  And much more!
```

==~==~==

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
.....

Nintendo Cuts GameCube Price to \$149

Video game publisher Nintendo Co. Ltd. on Monday said it would cut the U.S. price of its GameCube game console by about 25 percent, in a bid to maintain its price advantage over its main competitors in the \$20 billion international video game business.

Nintendo, most famous for its franchise character, the squat and rotund plumber Mario, lowered the U.S. price to \$149.95 from \$199 effective May 21.

"We were thrilled to be able to come out at \$199 ... so we're just going to be ahead of the game at 149," Peril Kaplan, vice president of corporate communications for Nintendo, told Reuters. "We started aggressive and this just continues it."

Kaplan said there were no plans for hardware price cuts in other regions, nor are there plans to cut the price of top software titles from \$49.99.

Nintendo's two main competitors, Sony Corp. and Microsoft Corp., cut the North American prices of their consoles, the PlayStation 2 and the Xbox, to \$199 from \$299 last week,

As opposed to those two consoles, the GameCube has been positioned in the market as a lower-priced alternative appealing mostly to children aged 6-14, a demographic Nintendo has dominated for nearly 20 years internationally.

The company said it has shipped 4.5 million GameCubes worldwide to date, and 2.5 million units of its top title "Super Smash Bros. Melee."

The GameCube was released in Japan in September, in the U.S. in November (three days after the Xbox), and in Europe earlier this month.

Last week Nintendo said it would release adapters in the fall to allow people to play games online with the GameCube, though it said it is in no rush to produce games itself for the online service.

Nintendo's shares have dropped 20 percent since the start of the year in Japan, due in part to profit-taking after a year-end rally fueled by strong pre-holiday sales, but also reflecting market concerns about discounting and rising competition.

Later on Monday in Los Angeles, a Microsoft media conference will kick off the Electronic Entertainment Expo, better-known as E3, the video game industry's annual trade show.

Most of the news about price cuts that was made in the last week had been expected to come at E3, leaving analysts to speculate that the show will

now return to its roots and focus primarily on new games for the various systems.

Nintendo plans to release GameCube games later this year based on its most popular franchises -- Mario, "Zelda" and "Metroid" -- all of which are expected to be exhibited at the show.

"I think Nintendo will come out of (the show) stronger than they went in," John Davison, the editorial director of the Ziff Davis Media Game Group, told Reuters last week.

Davison said Nintendo was virtually guaranteed to do well later this year, as "Super Mario Sunshine" and its other franchises titles have an eager audience among people who have been playing games in those series since Nintendo first arrived in the U.S. in the mid-1980s.

The U.S. video game business is in the early part of what analysts and industry executives have said will be a multiyear cycle of record growth, driven by sales of the three consoles and associated games and peripherals.

Sales of video game hardware and software topped \$9 billion in the U.S. last year, with 2002 expected to easily beat that record.

"Star Wars" To Play on Xbox, PlayStation

LucasArts said Monday that it would begin developing online games for Microsoft's Xbox and Sony's PlayStation 2.

The video game division of George Lucas' multimedia empire will begin producing the first of its "Star Wars Galaxies" online gaming series for the two consoles.

LucasArts did not disclose a release date, but said it would produce the multiplayer games for the next two generations of the Xbox and PlayStation.

Microsoft and Sony have ambitious plans to make the Internet a more central element in video games. Online gaming allows companies to charge customers monthly fees so they can play more interactive and collaborative games.

In one example, Sony's "EverQuest" has experienced wild popularity, with hundreds of thousands of subscribers paying \$13 a month to play.

In the "Star Wars Galaxies" series, players take on character roles and engage in various quests while interacting with other players. LucasArts in December will release a PC version of the game, "Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided," which is being developed by Sony Online Entertainment.

Electronic Arts to Bring 'Sims' to PlayStation 2

Electronic Arts Inc., the largest independent video game publisher, said on Monday it will bring "The Sims," the best-selling PC game ever, to Sony

Corp.'s PlayStation 2 console this fall.

Redwood City, California-based Electronic Arts said the console version of the Sims, which has sold a total of 15 million units over its lifetime, was under development by its Maxis studio.

The company plans to show previews of the PlayStation version at the industry's Electronic Entertainment Expo this week in Los Angeles, it said.

"The Sims," in which players control the lives of a number of characters -- including where they live, what they eat, how they dress, and even who they love -- was the top-selling PC game for the last two years.

In the console version, which will allow two players to play at once, players will control one character and move him or her through major life events, gaining access to better housing and objects (like a bug zapper) along the way.

Take-Two Says 'Grand Theft Auto' Sequel Coming

Video game publisher Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. said on Tuesday it is preparing a sequel to its blockbuster "Grand Theft Auto 3" for release in late October, following on the success of a game that dominated U.S. sales charts for months.

"Grand Theft Auto: Vice City" will ship to retailers on Oct. 22 for Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 2 game console, Take-Two said.

"GTA3" was the best selling video game in the United States from its release at the end of October 2001 until mid-March this year, based on units sold, and was the top console game of 2001, on the same basis.

It was also the top game at rental in the first quarter, and its strength was directly responsible for Take-Two raising its fiscal 2002 guidance. The company said it has sold more than 6 million units worldwide to date.

The game, a criminal adventure that allows players to, among other things, run over senior citizens and shoot at law enforcement officers, was initially banned by the Australian government because of its violent content.

Despite an accounting scandal that led the company to restate its fiscal 2001 results (twice, for some quarters) and the replacement of two chief financial officers in about three months, Take-Two shares are up more than 62 percent this year.

More details about "Vice City" are expected in July, the company said.

Video Game Publishers Out to Shine at Industry Show

The promise of the \$20 billion video game industry comes down to this: fat plumbers on jet packs, cartoon characters blown to bits, and a touchdown pass thrown against an opponent several time zones away.

"The only way the companies can differentiate themselves is with better content," said Michael Pachter, an analyst at Wedbush Morgan Securities who follows the independent game publishers.

At the video game industry's annual trade show, the Electronic Entertainment Expo, attention has focused on the battle between the major console makers -- Sony Corp, Nintendo Co. Ltd., and Microsoft Corp.

But the game publishers have been the biggest winners as the game box makers cut prices and spend millions to market the PlayStation 2, GameCube and Xbox, analysts have said.

Shares in the top U.S. game publishers are outperforming the Nasdaq by a wide margin again this year. First-quarter sales by the three that have reported -- Electronic Arts Inc. , Activision Inc. and THQ Inc. -- were up a combined 45 percent.

Looking to maintain that momentum, the game makers are showing off a mix of new games that aim to strike a balance between online offerings, which are seen as the wave of the future, and franchises built around familiar characters, which, like Hollywood sequels, are seen as a low risk proposition.

I think you're going to see innovation in different genres people haven't tried before," Pachter said.

Many of the games on preview at E3 are updates on familiar brands. Nintendo, for example, has debuted its latest version of its enduring "Mario" series, built around the misadventures of the company's signature squat plumber in red overalls.

Analysts expect the August debut of the game to support sales of Nintendo's GameCube, whose price was cut by some 25 percent in the United States this week to an industry low of \$149.95.

Meanwhile, rivals Sony and Microsoft both clinched deals with the game publishing arm of filmmaker George Lucas' entertainment empire to bring online versions of role-playing games based on "Star Wars" to their competing consoles.

Sony and Microsoft both cut prices of their game machines to \$199 in the run-up to the trade show.

In another sign of the increasingly close ties between the Hollywood movie studios and the game publishers, AOL Time Warner unit Warner Bros has announced a raft of licensing deals, from games based on sequels to the action thriller "The Matrix" to those featuring cartoon icons like Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck.

Electronic Arts, the No. 1 independent publisher, plans to show a number of sports games, including an online version of "Madden NFL 2003" for Sony's PlayStation 2 and the latest game based on the successful "Harry Potter" franchise.

The company also said on Monday it will bring a version of "The Sims," the best-selling PC game ever, to the PS2 this fall, with changes that will allow two players to play simultaneously.

A major part of Activision's push is "Tony Hawk Pro Skater 4," the latest

game in the series credited for a major part of the company's recent successes. It will also show a number of other games in its growing "extreme sports" brand.

That brand, which the company calls Activision 02, has grown in importance to the company, which now has dozens of "extreme" athletes under contract for future titles.

THQ, with a firm grip on the older children/younger teens market, will show a number of new games in its co-publishing deal with Sega Corp. for the Game Boy Advance.

The company also plans to show titles from its long-standing World Wrestling Entertainment franchise, as well as games based on pop singer Britney Spears.

Sega will also be active at the show. The Japanese publisher, which made game consoles until last year, will show a number of online games for PS2, as well as for newly-announced online platforms for Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox and Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s GameCube.

Other titles expected to draw attention include Acclaim Entertainment Inc.'s "Turok," a dinosaur adventure game on which the company is betting heavily, and a "Lord of the Rings" title from Universal Interactive based on the famous book series, rather than the new films.

"Myst" Adds Twist To Online Gaming

The creators of "Myst," one of the most popular PC games of all time, are working on an online version of the adventure game, publisher Ubi Soft Entertainment announced Thursday.

"Myst Online" will go on sale next year at a date to be announced, the company said at the Electronic Entertainment Expo trade show here. The game will include both a boxed software product and a subscription online service, the company said.

The announcement marks the latest attempt to expand the popularity of the potentially lucrative online gaming world, currently dominated by fantasy games such as Sony's "EverQuest," which has hundreds of thousands of players paying monthly fees to access its virtual world.

Analysts have said that for online gaming to expand, publishers will have to develop titles likely to appeal to more mainstream consumers. Leading candidates include "Star Wars Galaxies," a role-playing game based on the film series, and "The Sims Online," an online version of the hit PC game.

Jason Rubinstein, general manager of Ubi Soft's online operation, said the company expects "Myst Online" to replicate the broad appeal of the original games, which have sold more than 11 million copies.

Rand Miller, CEO of "Myst" developer Cyan Worlds, said that instead of creating a "massively multiplayer" online world that can accommodate thousands of players at once, "Myst Online" will focus on offering players an ever-expanding environment to explore. The game's world will be expanded with regular updates, creating an episodic approach to gaming similar to a TV series, he said. Such an approach is more likely to appeal

to mainstream consumers than potentially addictive role-playing games would.

"I think to have mass-market appeal, you can't require the level of attention a lot of these online games demand," Miller said. "Most people don't want to hang around with a thousand other people. They want to explore interesting places with a few of their friends."

The episodic format will create ongoing deadline challenges, acknowledged Miller, who became notorious in the industry for repeated delays in delivering "Riven," the first sequel to "Myst." "That's the strength and the challenge: We have got to build stuff continuously that will keep people engrossed and wondering what's going to be there next week," he said.

Ubi Soft said pricing for "Myst Online" will be announced closer to the release.

Nintendo Banking on New, Improved 'Mario'

In the heated battle for the fast-growing market in video games, Nintendo Co. Ltd. is sticking with the pair that made it an industry contender: a squat plumber and his almost equally famous creator.

To the roar of an elated crowd, Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo's famed video game designer, appeared at an event here on Tuesday to demonstrate his latest creation: the newest version of the company's flagship "Mario" game franchise.

Miyamoto appeared from the back of a hotel auditorium using Nintendo's new "WaveBird" wireless control pad to play "Super Mario Sunshine" at a media event on the second day of the video game industry's annual trade show, the Electronic Entertainment Expo.

The game is the latest in a Nintendo series centered around Mario, the rotund plumber in red overalls, that has sold tens of millions of copies worldwide. It has been hotly anticipated since Nintendo first showed preliminary screenshots last year.

Analysts expect the August debut of the game will support sales of Nintendo's GameCube console, which came out in the United States last November and has sold well, but is still fighting for significant market share against market leader Sony Corp. and ambitious rival Microsoft Corp.

Sony all but declared victory in the console wars on Tuesday, saying that a recent price cut to \$199 on its PlayStation 2 unit had ignited sales and would give it an insurmountable lead against its rivals.

Nintendo, which chopped \$50 off the price of its GameCube, taking it to an industry low of \$149, rejected Sony's claim as premature.

"I think they know now the battle is on," said Peter MacDougall, executive vice president for sales and marketing for Nintendo of America.

MacDougall said Nintendo's marketing budget for the rest of the year would be 25 percent larger than the same period last year. "GameCube in this

market is currently showing a healthy momentum," he said.

Nintendo also emphasized its handheld system, the Game Boy Advance, which was released last June and has a near-complete lock on the handheld game market.

By the end of this year, Nintendo will have 300 games out for the GBA in America, in addition to 150 GameCube games, said Satoru Iwata, director of corporate planning for Nintendo.

As opposed to competitors Sony and Microsoft, who often tout the hardware advantages of their PlayStation 2 and Xbox consoles, Nintendo's strategy has always been to showcase the games themselves.

Besides "Mario," Miyamoto showed another game, "The Legend of Zelda," which was heavily criticized in previews last year for moving away from the franchise's traditional look in favor of a graphics style most often described as cartoon-like.

While Nintendo is hopeful the game will be ready for the holiday season, MacDougall said the official shipping target is February 2003.

MacDougall also addressed criticisms that the GameCube skews too heavily toward Nintendo's traditional core audience of preteen gamers, showing off titles like "Resident Evil Zero" and "Eternal Darkness" that were laden with flesh-eating zombies and medieval weaponry.

In another contrast to its rivals, Nintendo has downplayed online gaming plans. While it said last week it would release adapters in the fall to allow online gameplay, Nintendo has also said from the start that online gaming was still largely an experiment.

That cautious stance is in stark opposition to Sony and Microsoft, which are actively pushing their online offerings, both launching later this year, as the next frontier of gaming.

Microsoft, in particular, has staked much on the development of online gaming, announcing this week it will build its own network called "Xbox Live" to connect players around the world.

"We agree that online games do hold promise," Iwata said.

Wireless Video Game Controllers Gain Steam

If you think video game consoles have taken over the living room, look out: your kitchen or dining room may be next, thanks to the slew of wireless game controllers set to hit the market this year.

For most of the past two decades, home video games have come equipped with controllers -- also called gamepads -- with a trailing 8-10 foot (3 meter) wire that allowed the user to shoot aliens, jump over mushrooms and otherwise play games.

At the Electronics Entertainment Expo, the industry's major trade show, several companies including peripheral maker Logitech International SA showcased cordless gamepads that allow users to keep their games going from as far as 30 feet away from the console.

The devices feature fast reaction times and little or no interference from cordless phones and human bodies that might cross between the gamepad and the device.

Logitech's this week unveiled its Cordless Controller compatible with Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox video game console, boasting up to 50 hours of game play and a "rumble" feature. It also showcased a controller that works with Sony Corp.'s PlayStation consoles.

"The technology allows the performance to be identical between a corded and cordless device, so there is no reason in the world for people to want a corded device. There is no benefit that cord brings," said Fred Swan, of Logitech's Interactive Business unit.

While people may prefer to be free to roam with a controller, price may play a factor in buyers decision to move to cordless controllers, however. Swan said that the gamepads will sell at various prices: \$49 each for models that work with personal computers, \$59 for PlayStation models, and \$69 for Xbox controllers.

That comes on top of the \$200 that most buyers will pay for the actual game console and \$50, on average, for games. Game consoles come equipped with a corded controller.

Logitech's does not have plans to develop a device for Nintendo Co. LTD., which last week introduced its own wireless model, Wavebird.

The device, due on June 10 at about \$35, works from up to 20 feet (6 meters) away from its GameCube console. The company said its batteries will last for more than 100 hours.

Private technology development company Eleven Engineering Inc. debuted a demonstration model of its xiSpike system for wireless controllers, which can switch with the press of a button which console the gamepad controls. For example a player could shift from Xbox to a PlayStation without changing gamepads.

The company said it has an agreement with a consumer electronics device maker to will mass produce the device for sale by the peak year-end holiday season this year.

Nintendo Chief to Step Down After 52 Years at Helm

Japanese videogame maker Nintendo Co Ltd said on Friday its charismatic president Hiroshi Yamauchi, 74, would step down after more than half a century at the helm, handing power to a carefully groomed management group.

Yamauchi, outspoken but publicity-shy and a stand-out with his purple suits and plainspoken style, guided Nintendo's meteoric rise from a tiny maker of card games to a videogame powerhouse.

His strategy, centered on creating innovative games rather than building ambitious entertainment platforms like the rival PlayStation 2 and Xbox, is expected to remain intact under the new management team.

Taking the post of president on May 31 will be Satoru Iwata, the 42-year-old chief of corporate planning who joined the company two years ago from a game software developer.

"Six executive board members will form a management team that I hope will move quickly on vital matters," Yamauchi told a news conference at the company's headquarters in the ancient capital city of Kyoto.

"My job now will be simply to keep an eye on the whole process."

He will retain the title of adviser to the company but will not be part of the top management team.

The market had long expected that Yamauchi would be replaced by a team rather than a single, charismatic individual, said Takashi Oka, chief analyst at Tsubasa Research Institute.

Nintendo's share price showed little reaction to the news, closing up 0.17 percent at 17,630 yen in a generally flat market.

"I don't think the move will affect Nintendo's share price," Oka said.

There are worries that Yamauchi's influence with game software companies may be sorely missed -- particularly his knack for selecting talented partners and enforcing strict loyalty to the Nintendo platform.

"The new management does not have a charismatic or 'god-like' figure, so there is a risk that software makers may be able to get the upper hand in their dealings with Nintendo," Oka said.

Other members of the top management team will include Genyo Takeda, head of hardware development, and Shigeru Miyamoto, software development leader and creator of the hit "Zelda" game series. Executive Vice President Atsushi Asada will become chairman.

Yamauchi, who succeeded his grandfather as Nintendo's president in 1949 while he was still a university student, led the company through such milestones as the 1983 launch in Japan of the so-called Family Computer.

Later successes such as the Game Boy handheld game machine and hit game titles such as Mario and the Pokemon series fueled rapid profit growth.

A perennial fixture on Japan's billionaire list, Yamauchi dropped hints of his impending retirement in January, telling reporters that he may step down in the first half of the year.

He built the company into one of Japan's most cash-rich enterprises and grabbed headlines when he bought the Seattle Mariners baseball team.

His departure comes at a challenging time for the game maker, with its flagship GameCube home console entangled in a fierce three-way battle that includes Sony Corp's PlayStation 2 and Microsoft Corp's Xbox.

All three have announced deep price cuts over the past two weeks for their mainstay game machines.

For the software publishing industry, video games are a numbers game. And for now, Microsoft is on the losing end.

That's the upshot from the Electronics Entertainment Expo, the game industry's main trade show, where new games for Microsoft's Xbox have largely been limited to "me too" titles--games already appearing on other consoles. Microsoft has said it expects to have more than 200 games for the Xbox by the end of the year, but less than two dozen of those will be exclusive Xbox titles from third-party publishers.

Sony, by contrast, is touting high-profile exclusives from game publishers. "Grand Theft Auto III," the top-selling video game for the past few months, will remain available only for Sony's PlayStation 2, with publisher Take Two Interactive Software scrapping previous plans for an Xbox version. New versions of Eidos' "Tomb Raider" and Electronic Arts' "Medal of Honor" franchises will also be available only for the PS2, as will upcoming online and offline updates of the "Final Fantasy" series from longtime Sony booster Squaresoft.

Game publishers say it's a simple matter of economics. With Sony having sold more than 30 million PlayStation 2 units worldwide and the Xbox just edging up to the 4 million mark, they have to put their money where the market is. The result is that even the biggest Xbox supporters are producing two PlayStation 2 games for every Xbox title.

"We love the Xbox; we love Microsoft," said Jeff Brown, vice president of corporate communications for leading games publisher EA. "The worst thing that could happen to EA is to wake up one day to find Sony out there by itself. But when you make decisions short term, you have to look at the installed base. It's pretty clear if you're running a business selling games, you're simply going to sell more units on the PS2."

Console makers can try to tip the balance by offering marketing assistance to game publishers and even helping to pay development costs, but such efforts only go so far, said Luc Vanhal, president of Vivendi Universal Publishing. Vivendi earlier announced that "Malice," a game Microsoft touted as an exclusive at the Xbox's public unveiling, will also be available for the PS2.

"Microsoft is much more aggressive going after exclusive deals," Vanhal said. "They realize they really need to give an incentive to publishers to focus on the Xbox."

"But it still comes down to economics," Vanhal said. "It costs quite a bit of money to develop a game. I need to recoup that money, and it's easier to do that when you're selling to a market of 30 million."

Kaz Hirai, president of Sony Computer Entertainment of America, said publishers have found it more expensive than many had expected to produce multiple versions of a game.

"There's a significant investment to having multiple retail packages," said Hirai, who kept E3 buzzing by declaring victory in the console wars. "At some point you have to say, 'Time out: Does it make sense for me to do a PlayStation exclusive? How much value do I get from doing other versions?'"

Publishers say the recent round of console price cuts will help Microsoft build an installed base for Xbox more quickly. Leading retailers have

reported sales increases of up to 800 percent for both consoles since the Xbox and the PlayStation 2 were each lowered to \$199.

But Microsoft also needs to break out of the commodity market that game consoles have become, they say. Despite clear technological advantages enjoyed by the Xbox, especially its built-in hard drive, Xbox games so far have pretty much played like those for competing systems.

"I believe the marketing mistake has been in letting people believe the Xbox is the same product as the other consoles," said Bruno Bonnell, president of Infogrames. The game publisher recently dealt another blow to Xbox by announcing plans to publish a PlayStation 2 version of its upcoming game based on "The Matrix," despite Microsoft having invested \$1 million in recent Infogrames acquisition Shiny Entertainment to fund development of the game.

"Xbox has a lot of features nobody's really taken advantage of yet," Bonnell said. "If someone built a game that fully utilizes the hard drive, the voice capability, people would see there's a real difference. The best evidence is the price: Microsoft knew they couldn't get people to pay extra for better technology, because they don't have a case yet for how that improves the games."

Don Coyner, Microsoft's director of marketing for Xbox, said it's typical for developers to need time to fully exploit a new console. He's confident that "Blinx," a Microsoft-created jump-and-run game that allows players to record and replay segments, will show developers how a hard drive can improve game design.

"'Blinx' is really the first game that takes full advantage of the hard drive," Coyner said. "Console developers are not used to working with a hard drive. It takes awhile for a developer to think about what it can do, and it takes someone who sees the potential to take advantage of it and really push gaming concepts forward."

Nintendo's survival strategy has been to come up with its own system-selling franchises, including characters such as Mario, Pokemon and Zelda. Perrin Kaplan, vice president of marketing and corporate affairs for Nintendo of America, said Microsoft could learn a thing or two from the Nintendo approach.

"We're worried about Microsoft," Kaplan said. "They've spent all this money building an online network, and they've lost focus on the games. Microsoft is doing technology, versus investing in content, and content drives this business."

==~==~==

->A-ONE Gaming Online
.....

- Online Users Grow! & Purr!

Just want to remind you that Jagfest 2002 (aka Jagfest 2k2) will be held in Saint Louis, MO on July 12th and 13th, 2002 at The Mayfair Wyndham Historic Hotel 806 St. Charles Street St. Louis, MO 63101 Phone: (314) 421-2500

Right now we are looking for users groups and/or dealers to come or support the fest the following two Press Releases goes into more detail:

Now accepting payment for Jagfest 2002

For Immediate Release:

April 25, 2002

Greg George, Webmaster of The Atari Times website, has announced that he is now accepting payment for the Sixth Annual Atari Jaguar Festival (dubbed Jagfest 2k2) in downtown St. Louis, Missouri at The Mayfair Wyndham Historic Hotel. (806 St. Charles Street St. Louis, Missouri 63101. Phone: 314-421-2500) on Friday, July 12th and Saturday, July 13th 2002.

Admission cost for this event is \$25.00 for those who wish to pre-pay and \$30.00 for those who wish pay at the door; this cost covers for both days. Table prices are as follows (admission price is included): Visitor tables: \$35.00 before July 9th (after July 9th its \$40.00), Dealer Tables: \$45.00 before July 9th (after July 9th its \$50.00) (extra tables are \$5.00 each).

You can pay either by paypal (greg@ataritimes.com) or by sending a Check or Money Order to:

Gregoary D. George, 347 Banyan Drive, Winter Haven, FL 33884
Attn. Jagfest payments

For more information On Jag fest 2k2 e-mail Greg George at greg@ataritimes.com, James Garvin at omc@omcgames.com or Daniel Iacovelli at atarivideoclub@yahoo.com or visit the Jagfest 2002 site at <http://omcgames.com/jagfest/> (be sure to visit the Jag fest message board and post your ideas for this event.)

END PRESS RELEASE

Jagfest 2002 Program Ad Pricing

For Immediate Release:

May 3, 2002

Greg George, Webmaster of The Atari Times website, has announced that he is now accepting payment for advertising in the Sixth Annual Atari Jaguar Festival (dubbed Jagfest 2k2) Program. The pricing for placing an ad in the Jagfest 2002 program is as follows:

\$15.00 for quarter page
\$25.00 for half page
\$50.00 for full page

A listing on the back page is under \$15.00

For full details on how to place your ad in the program contact Greg George.

You can pay either by paypal (greg@ataritimes.com) or by sending a Check or Money Order to

Gregory D. George, 347 Banyan Drive, Winter Haven, FL 33884
Attn. Jagfest ad payments

For more information On Jag fest 2k2 e-mail Greg George at greg@ataritimes.com, James Garvin at omc@omcgames.com or Daniel Iacovelli at atarivideoclub@yahoo.com or visit the Jagfest 2002 site at <http://omcgames.com/jagfest>

(be sure to visit the Jag fest message board and post your ideas for this event)

if you want to help out by spreading the word about Jagfest 2k2 e-mail me and I'll tell you where to d/l the flyer.

Daniel M. Iacovelli
Atari Video Club Chairperson
Editor of The Atari Zone Fanzine and E-zine
E-mail: Atarivideoclub@yahoo.com
(ICQ #14051068)
Webmaster of AVC Online
<http://avc.atari.users.net>

==~==~==

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Four Years On, Microsoft Case Far From Over

Saturday marked the four-year anniversary of Microsoft's antitrust case, which, legal experts say, could still go on for quite some time to come.

And the longer the case drags on, they say, the more likely it is that Microsoft would escape largely unscathed from its legal tangle with federal and state trustbusters. Many of the company's court-affirmed violations occurred at least five years ago. With appeals, the process now under way could stretch on for two more years or longer, which could make any remedy essentially meaningless.

"At some point, Microsoft could argue that the fast-changing technology sector has moved beyond the scope of the original case brought by the Justice Department," said Andy Gavil, an antitrust professor with Howard University's School of Law.

On the other hand, the nine states that continued with litigation against

Microsoft, despite a November settlement by their former comrades in arms, have been trying to use the flip side of that argument to wring a wide array of new concessions from the software giant. Their claim is that Microsoft committed further antitrust violations with newer technologies and later versions of its software, despite earlier rulings that found it at fault.

On Friday, after 32 days of testimony--nearly half that of the original trial--and two months in the courtroom, lawyers left U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly to ponder what sanctions she would eventually impose against Microsoft as a result of that continuing litigation. Attorneys for Microsoft and for the nine states and the District of Columbia, which rejected the settlement by the Justice Department and nine other states, are scheduled to present final arguments in the current proceeding on June 19. Kollar-Kotelly is expected to issue a ruling in late summer or early autumn.

The Justice Department and 20 states had filed the landmark lawsuit on May 18, 1998, alleging that Microsoft used its monopoly in Intel-based operating systems to crush upstart Netscape Communications, now owned by AOL Time Warner.

During the four years since, two states dropped out of the case, a federal judge ordered a breakup of Microsoft, an appeals court threw out that order, a new judge took responsibility for the case, and the majority of original plaintiffs settled with the software giant. Yet even with the findings of two courts--in April 2000 and June 2001--that the software giant violated the Sherman Antitrust Act, no remedy has been put into effect to rein in Microsoft's monopoly power.

At some point in the future, Microsoft could convince the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court to send the case back for retrial.

"In the war of attrition, so far Microsoft is winning," said Rich Gray, a Menlo Park, Calif.-based attorney closely following the trial.

Kollar-Kotelly's decision, say legal experts, won't be an easy one. The judge must sift through a virtual mountain of evidence before deciding what remedy is appropriate for Microsoft's antitrust violations. The settlement, which she has not yet approved, further complicates the process. No matter what she decides, one thing is certain: An appeal from either side, or both, means the case brought four years ago might still be years from being over.

Kollar-Kotelly is expected to issue what are known as findings of fact and conclusions of law as the main part of her ruling. U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson also issued such documents, but he chose to separate them by about six months. Kollar-Kotelly is expected to take the more common approach of issuing the documents at the same time, possibly with her court-imposed remedy, should she issue one. She also could release the remedy decree at a later time.

Issuance of the remedy would likely trigger one or more appeals, as it did when Jackson issued his breakup order in June 2000. Any appeal would likely be heard by the U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and possibly the Supreme Court.

The more time the process takes, the greater the likelihood that Microsoft could find new ways to entrench its Windows monopoly, legal experts warn, potentially nullifying the legal process--to the company's benefit.

"Without a doubt," Gray said, "the longer this thing goes on, the better for Microsoft's position in the marketplace."

Unlike criminal law, in which those convicted of crimes are punished for their wrongdoings, antitrust law focuses more on correcting the damage done by the wrongdoing. Trustbusters have not asked for punitive action, such as fines, against Microsoft. Kollar-Kotelly instead will be looking to put in place mechanisms that will prevent further anti-competitive acts by Microsoft. In theory, her remedy would help restore competition and foster more consumer choice.

But unlike her predecessor, Kollar-Kotelly has the complication of deciding whether she should weigh two possible remedy options against each other or treat them separately.

On track one is the Justice Department settlement, which for five years would place some restrictions on Microsoft's business practices and compel the company to disclose more Windows technical information to software developers. Microsoft also would agree to let PC makers and consumers hide access to so-called middleware technologies, such as Web browsing and instant messaging, but not remove any software code. Later this month, Microsoft is expected to release a beta--or test--version of a Windows XP update that would address these changes.

On track two, the judge must contend with the stiffer remedies--many affecting software code--requested by the litigating states. Among other things, the states want Microsoft to sell a second, modular version of Windows from which PC makers could remove middleware; license its Office application through auction for use on other operating systems; give away for free the source code, or blueprint, to Internet Explorer; and carry support for Sun Microsystems' Java language in Windows for 10 years. A crown jewel provision would force Microsoft to give away for free the source code to any software, including Windows, found in violation of the 10-year decree.

"Technically they should be two separate processes, but I think you will find the two are going to go hand in hand," Gavil said. One reason: Kollar-Kotelly has yet to approve the settlement deal cut in November.

Gavil predicted that the judge would eventually approve the settlement but also impose additional remedies. "Understanding that her order will be stayed, subject to appeal--that's why she will approve something on track one," he said.

In terms of the settlement, Kollar-Kotelly is very limited in what she can do. On the other hand, she has broad discretion in crafting a remedy.

"Under the statute (for the settlement), she only has two options: She can approve or reject it," Gavil said. "But in practicality she has the middle ground of saying, 'I will only approve if you agree to certain changes.' She hasn't shown any inclination to be that hands on, but that doesn't mean she wouldn't at some point sit down with the federal government and Microsoft and ask for changes. There would then be a lot of pressure on the Justice Department and Microsoft to make those changes."

Such a request would not be without precedent, say legal experts. The judge overseeing the AT&T breakup, for example, requested eight changes before approving the settlement.

"If she doesn't ask for any changes, then she's not likely to do very much with track two," Gavil said. "But it's very unlikely for her to go through all of this process and say, 'I'm not going to order any additional remedies.' I don't think there's a basis for saying the states failed to meet their burden of proof in whole--maybe in particular parts or sections, they did."

A truism in the tech industry is that Microsoft is notorious for getting software "right" on the third try. Does the same rule apply to judges? An appeals court removed Microsoft's first jurist, U.S. District Judge Stanley Sporkin, for refusing to sign a 1994 settlement deal between the Justice Department and Microsoft. The appellate court removed Jackson for talking to the media behind the scenes during the main part of the antitrust trial. Kollar-Kotelly, who has little experience with antitrust issues and is burdened with taking over the case late in the process, might appear to be the right judge for Microsoft.

"She certainly made a lot of rulings that appeared to favor Microsoft," Gray said. "But many of those were procedural issues. Most of the big stuff went to the states."

If anything, Kollar-Kotelly's ongoing chastising of the states "could indicate she was frustrated with them for not putting on a better case," Gray said. "They also made a number of procedural errors. The last thing any judge wants is to be reversed on appeal because of a point of procedure. She knows no matter what she does, Microsoft is going to appeal this thing."

Kollar-Kotelly, unlike Jackson, made few comments during testimony and asked few questions. In fact, her quiet demeanor made it "pretty difficult" to read her impressions of testimony and evidence, Gavil said. "She's close to the vest."

But in court last week, as lawyers argued several motions before her, Kollar-Kotelly not only asked lots of questions, but also demonstrated that she understands some of the case's technological nuances.

"I was astounded by some of technical questions she asked," said Bob Lande, an antitrust professor with University of Baltimore Law School. "I think she surprised everyone by her technical grasp of the case."

That understanding could be essential to sorting out several complex issues vital to crafting a remedy. No matter what she does, Kollar-Kotelly made clear to Microsoft on Friday that she expects the company to hold to its promise to abide by whatever the court orders.

During three days in court last month, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates testified that the company is "committed to complying fully with court orders, including any remedy that might be ordered in this case. We can do that only if the remedy is clear as written and its terms feasible."

"I would expect that that's going to be the case," Kollar-Kotelly told Microsoft's attorneys on Friday, "because these are the kinds of things that come back to haunt you if it turns out you don't, because I will have a memory for all of these statements."

The first product changes dictated by a proposed anti-trust settlement with Microsoft Corp. will appear next week in a software patch for Windows XP, the company said on Friday.

Microsoft and the U.S. Department of Justice agreed to a settlement in October designed to address complaints that the software giant was using its market dominance to bully computer manufacturers and others to favor its products.

The settlement, which is being challenged as inadequate by nine states, would give computer makers more flexibility to feature rival software on their machines.

The settlement is not binding until signed by the judge, although Microsoft agreed to comply with certain conditions before then, Jim Cullinan, lead product manager, told Reuters.

The Windows XP Service Pack 1 will be released to more than 10,000 beta testers by the end of May and then made available to the public around the end of August, he said.

The software allows computer manufacturers and users a variety of options in making default settings for certain popular programs including Web browser, e-mail, instant messenger and media player for audio and video.

A new button on the Windows start menu, titled "set program access and defaults," allows users to choose between four default options: computer manufacturer choice; Microsoft only software; non-Microsoft software; and customized settings, which is the default choice.

Users can choose to set defaults to one program but also display alternative programs, or they can hide other programs so that the icons are not on the desktop or in other areas, eliminating easy access to the programs.

Previously, computer makers could set defaults to programs other than Microsoft's but could not hide Microsoft programs, except for the browser, like they can now.

Microsoft allowed computer makers to hide access to Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser after an appeals court in June agreed with a lower court that Microsoft had illegally maintained its monopoly in personal computer operating systems.

In the coming months, Microsoft plans to share code with competitors that will enable them to write programs that interact with XP in the same way Microsoft programs do, Cullinan said.

Microsoft will release application programming interfaces, code that reveals how a software program talks to the operating system, he said. The company also will license protocols used in communications between desktop Windows PCs and servers, he added.

The company did not decide to release the service pack because of the settlement, but rather because Windows NT code, formerly used in products aimed at the corporate market, is now in XP and being used by consumers, Cullinan said.

Service packs are meant to fix critical compatibility, reliability and

security issues in a product until an updated version of it can be released.

"We've never issued a service pack for a general consumer" product, he said.

The service pack will reflect specialized employee training in anti-trust law as well as in secure product design and development, Cullinan said. The company announced a push earlier this year to make security a priority in all its products.

"You will see some fixes based on that work," he said, of the security training. "It's one step. There's still a long way to go."

The service pack will roll up about a dozen or so critical security problems that have already been patched in XP and accompanying programs like Windows Messenger instant messaging, he said.

The software also changes the Passport settings so that they don't pop up soliciting registration until a user accesses a service that requires Passport, such as Hotmail, Microsoft Network or Windows Messenger.

Passport allows users to enter their personal information once and have it accessible by multiple Web sites and services, rather than the user having to enter that data for each new service they sign up for.

The settlement was reached after the appeals court decision ruled that Microsoft was a monopoly but rejected a proposal to split the company in two.

California, Massachusetts and seven other states are pressing for more severe sanctions against Microsoft, such as forcing the company to sell a cheaper, stripped-down version of Windows and giving rivals easy access to detailed Windows code.

About 32 million copies of Windows XP have been sold since its release in October, according to Cullinan.

Netscape 7.0 Heats Up Browser Wars

America Online's Netscape Communication's subsidiary on Wednesday launched a preview of its newest Web browser, another sign of AOL's reinvigorated campaign to win consumers back from Microsoft.

The new browser, called Netscape 7.0, is the latest version developed around a technology called Gecko, which was created by the AOL-funded Mozilla open-source browser movement. Over the past year, the online giant has been testing Gecko in preview versions of its popular flagship AOL service.

Although AOL uses Microsoft's Internet Explorer as its default Web browser, the company has been clear about its intentions for reviving Netscape. It is currently beta testing its AOL 7.0 online service with Gecko for both Windows and Mac users, and its CompuServe subsidiary is now using Gecko in the official version of its service.

"'Browser wars' is a catchy term but not necessarily apropos," said AOL

spokesman Marty Gordon. "Microsoft was found to be engaging in monopolistic behavior. We think consumers want a choice, and Netscape is giving it to them."

Gordon would not say whether future generations of the AOL service plan to drop IE as the default Web-browsing technology.

Web browsers do not generate direct revenue to companies, but have the power to route people to Web sites through buttons and links featured throughout the software's interface. Netscape 7.0 comes bundled with buttons to AOL Instant Messenger, Netscape Mail, RealNetworks' streaming media player, Internet telephony service Net2Phone, and AOL Music's Radio@Netscape service.

Along with the new preview release, Netscape also unveiled a makeover of its home page, Netscape.com. The changes only go so far as a tweaking of its interface design, and the page continues to act as a traffic funnel to content produced by parent company AOL Time Warner. For example, the site still taps sites such as CNN for breaking news, Time Magazine for commentary and EW.com and People for entertainment gossip.

Sun Releases Major Software Upgrade

Sun Microsystems Inc. launched on Wednesday its biggest software upgrade in years, a new version of its flagship Solaris operating systems, which the computer maker is trying to integrate with popular upstart Linux.

Aiming to simplify networks choked by many layers of software, Sun has incorporated features that are usually separate programs into the operating system, the software which sits between applications and the machine, it said.

The roughly 300 new features of Solaris version 9 would help networks run with less intervention from administrators, a key to Sun's vision of the future and a potential cost savings for customers. It would also provide most users with a handful of "killer" improvements, said IDC analyst Al Gillen.

Sun says its strategy to add features such as a security "firewall" and elements of "middleware" that let different programs share information, redefine the operating system.

"This is a new class of product," Ed Zander, president and chief operating officer, told a news conference. Sun shares easily outpaced many rival technology stocks on the Nasdaq on Wednesday, rising 4.7 percent, 32 cents, to \$7.20 by midday.

Sun soared to renown as companies built networks and the Internet using its powerful work stations, but has had a hard time recovering since the economy slowed and the Internet boom collapsed about a year ago.

One element of Sun's historic success was its single-minded devotion to Solaris, a Unix-type operating system.

But it has sown confusion among analysts recently by promising to come out with a Linux low-end computer expected in July.

Linux is a newer but so far less powerful Unix that has captured the hearts of programmers, since it is not owned by a single company, was developed collaboratively, and corporations enamored of Linux's price: it is free.

Total Linux revenue nearly doubled in the first quarter from a year ago and it is still growing fast, Gartner Inc. server analyst Shahin Naftchi said.

While some critics say Linux will devour the entire Unix market, Sun's operating systems chief, Anil Gadre, says, "Fundamentally Linux and Solaris are two brothers."

Both systems compete with Microsoft Corp. Windows and other systems, he said in an interview ahead of the Solaris launch. Sun was developing Linux for network "edge" services, like print serving and mail serving, while Solaris, much more powerful, handled bigger computing tasks, he said.

"We are a very practical company at the end of the day," Gadre said.

Competitors International Business Machines Corp and Hewlett-Packard (news - web sites) Co. have supported Linux for some time. IBM, which released a more modest update of its Unix operating system, AIX, on Wednesday also, claims it is far ahead of Sun in Linux and "middleware".

"They don't have the middleware and they are late on Linux," said Vice President Surjit Chana, head of marketing for the high-end Unix computers for IBM. He also said customers did not want middleware thrown into the operating system, as Sun plans to do.

Technology researcher Bill Claybrook of Aberdeen said that Sun would fall behind quickly if it kept its Linux focused on the low end, since Linux was bound to get more sophisticated.

But he did not expect them to do so. "I think that Sun will be relatively aggressive in the Linux area," he said.

Sun also plans to make its own distribution version of Linux, giving it more room to incorporate some of the features from Solaris over time, he said.

"Of all the companies that are involved in Linux -- there is the new HP, Dell, IBM and now Sun -- they are the only ones that have their own distribution," he said.

Linux is maturing slowly, and it won't be able to take on tasks currently done by high-end Unix computers until around the end of the decade, he said.

Sun faced a dilemma about what hardware to use for its Linux systems, since selling hardware has been key to Sun's profits, he said.

But, he said, "Sun is the Unix company. There is no reason they can't become the Linux company if they want to."

House Passes Kid-Friendly Internet Bill

The U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday approved a proposal to create

a kid-friendly Internet zone free of violence, pornography and other adult material.

By a vote of 406 to 2, the House approved a bill that would set up an area within the United States' ".us" Internet domain allowing only Web sites deemed appropriate for children 12 years old and younger.

Web sites bearing a ".kids.us" address would have to certify that they do not contain sexually explicit material, hate speech, violence or other material not suitable for minors.

"The wild West of the World Wide Web will get tamed somewhat," said bill sponsor Rep. John Shimkus, an Illinois Republican, at a press conference.

In the Senate, North Dakota Democrat Byron Dorgan said he will introduce similar legislation later in the day with Nevada Republican John Ensign.

Unlike previous attempts to screen out online smut, the bill would regulate content only on a corner of the Internet that falls directly under U.S. government control. Better known domains such as ".com" and ".net," as well as the rest of the ".us" domain, would not be subject to restrictions.

"If you're in Tennessee, Taiwan or Timbuktu, you can publish or speak any content you want on the Internet," said co-sponsor Rep. Ed Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, in remarks on the House floor.

The bill represents the latest attempt to keep children away from the sexually explicit material easily available to anyone with a computer and an Internet connection.

The Supreme Court had thrown out an early attempt, the 1996 Communications Decency Act, as an infringement on free speech. A second, the 1998 Child Online Protection Act, remains sidelined by a court injunction.

More recently, lawmakers had hoped the international body that controls domain-name policy would set up a ".kids" domain.

After the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers passed on the idea in November 2000, Markey and Shimkus introduced a bill that would force it to set up a ".kids" domain.

But they backed off from that plan last fall after witnesses told them it would be difficult to dictate policy to ICANN, which is not under direct U.S. government control.

The revised bill would place a ".kids" subdomain under the control of NeuStar Inc., the Washington-based telecommunications company that won the contract to manage the ".us" country-code domain last fall.

NeuStar would be expected to police the subdomain to ensure it remains free of inappropriate content, and it would answer to the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Web sites in the domain would be prohibited from linking to sites outside it, and they could not set up chat rooms, instant messaging or other interactive services unless they could certify that they did not expose children to pedophiles or pose other risks.

If privately held NeuStar were to lose money on the venture, it could give control back to the Commerce Department, which would seek another operator.

House Moves to Protect Kids on Web

Citing the recent death of a Connecticut child who apparently fell victim to a man she met online, the House voted overwhelmingly to establish a new domain for kid-friendly Web sites and to expand wiretap authority to target Internet predators.

The domain measure, approved on a 406-2 vote, would have the federal government oversee a ".kids.us" domain on the Internet that would have only material appropriate for children under 13. Web site operators' participation would be voluntary. Parents could set computer software to limit a child's access to only addresses ending in .kids.us.

Lawmakers cited the death of Christina Long, a sixth-grader from Danbury, Conn., in urging passage of both bills. Police say she was strangled and her body dumped in a ravine by a 25-year-old man she met in an Internet chat room.

"Sometimes I think the World Wide Web should be renamed the World's Wicked Web," said Rep. Fred Upton (news, bio, voting record), R-Mich.

Supporters of the domain bill, sponsored by Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill., say it should reduce the chance of accidental exposure to pornography and to other Web sites considered harmful to children, and it would not provide any access to interactive features, such as chat rooms.

Groups opposing the domain, including the American Civil Liberties Union, have called the legislation a backdoor attempt at censorship.

Shimkus said parents need to be aware of what Web sites their children are surfing.

"I have repeatedly said that libraries have children's book sections, why can't the Internet have the same type of section devoted to children's interests?" he said.

Sen. Byron Dorgan (news, bio, voting record), D-N.D., plans to introduce a similar bill in the Senate, according to a spokesman.

The wiretap measure, approved 396-11, would allow investigators to seek wiretaps for suspected sexual predators to help block physical meetings between molesters and children they meet via the computer.

"The threat to our children is real," its chief sponsor, Rep. Nancy Johnson, R-Conn., said.

Wiretaps could be authorized for people suspected of engaging in child pornography, of trying to get children to perform sexual acts for money or of traveling to or bringing children for sexual activity.

Rep. Robert Scott, D-Va., argued against expanding wiretap authority, voicing concerns that even current limited use by law enforcement typically results in overhearing innocent conversations.

"It ought to be necessary," he said of wiretapping authority. "It's not enough for it to be helpful for law enforcement."

Rep. George Gekas, R-Pa., a former prosecutor, countered that safeguards against potential abuse would be in place because a court would determine whether any wiretap should proceed.

A similar wiretapping bill passed the House last year but died in the Senate.

'Copy-Proof' CDs Cracked With 99-Cent Marker Pen

Technology buffs have cracked music publishing giant Sony Music's elaborate disc copy-protection technology with a decidedly low-tech method: scribbling around the rim of a disk with a felt-tip marker.

Internet newsgroups have been circulating news of the discovery for the past week, and in typical newsgroup style, users have pilloried Sony for deploying "hi-tech" copy protection that can be defeated by paying a visit to a stationery store.

"I wonder what type of copy protection will come next?" one posting on alt.music.prince read. "Maybe they'll ban markers."

Sony did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

Major music labels, including Sony and Universal Music, have begun selling the "copy-proof" discs as a means of tackling the rampant spread of music piracy, which they claim is eating into sales.

The new technology aims to prevent consumers from copying, or "burning," music onto recordable CDs or onto their computer hard drives, which can then be shared with other users over file-sharing Internet services such as Kazaa or Morpheus MusicCity.

Monday, Reuters obtained an ordinary copy of Celine Dion's newest release "A New Day Has Come," which comes embedded with Sony's "Key2Audio" technology.

After an initial attempt to play the disc on a PC resulted in failure, the edge of the shiny side of the disc was blackened out with a felt tip marker. The second attempt with the marked-up CD played and copied to the hard drive without a hitch.

Internet postings claim that tape or even a sticky note can also be used to cover the security track, typically located on the outer rim of the disc. And there are suggestions that copy protection schemes used by other music labels can also be circumvented in a similar way.

Sony's proprietary technology, deployed on many recent releases, works by adding a track to the copy-protected disc that contains bogus data.

Because computer hard drives are programmed to read data files first, the computer will continuously try to play the bogus track first. It never gets to play the music tracks located elsewhere on the compact disc.

The effect is that the copy-protected disc will play on standard CD players but not on computer CD-ROM drives, some portable devices and even some car

stereo systems.

Some Apple Macintosh users have reported that playing the disc in the computer's CD drive causes the computer to crash. The cover of the copy-protected discs contain a warning that the album will not play on Macintoshes or other personal computers.

Apple has since posted a warning on its Web site at:
<http://kbase.info.apple.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/kbase.woa/wa/query?searchoode=Assisted&type=id&val=KC.106882>.

Sony Music Europe has taken the most aggressive anti-piracy stance in the business. Since last fall, the label has shipped more than 11 million copy-protected discs in Europe, with the largest proportion going to Germany, a market label executives claim is rife with illegal CD-burning.

Kazaa, Morpheus Legal Case Collapsing

A legal fight that has pitted file-swapping software companies Kazaa BV and StreamCast Networks against big record labels and movie studios is collapsing as the small companies run out of funds.

Netherlands-based Kazaa BV, which created the file-swapping technology underlying Kazaa, Grokster and earlier versions of Morpheus, is conceding defeat--although its founders already appear to have started another near-identical company. Meanwhile, StreamCast is losing a high-powered attorney with a winning track record against the music companies in court.

The disintegration of the companies' legal case will have little immediate affect on the popular Kazaa and Morpheus file-trading networks themselves. But it appears the second generation of high-profile peer-to-peer companies may be going the way of Napster, crushed by litigation too expensive for start-ups to fight.

"The case is in jeopardy of collapsing simply from the financial attrition of the defendants before a decision on the merits can be reached," StreamCast's attorneys wrote in a legal brief filed with the court Friday. "If that happens, it would be an unfortunate procedural triumph of a band of enormously powerful and wealthy companies, arising purely from their power and entirely unrelated to the substantive issues in the case."

The StreamCast and Kazaa BV case was viewed by some in the legal community as the best hope for vindicating basic peer-to-peer technology as legal in the wake of Napster's court losses. The technology created by Kazaa BV functions differently from Napster's original file-swapping directory service, giving the companies involved no direct role in the file-trading process, supporters said.

Indeed, a Dutch appeals court recently ruled that Kazaa BV was not responsible for copyright infringement by people using its technology, the first such ruling anywhere in the world.

The record companies have contested this view of the technology and law, however. The differences between Kazaa BV's and Napster's technologies are slight, and the file-swapping companies are still responsible for the widespread copyright violations committed by people using their technology, the record labels and movie studios say.

The entertainment giants have brought the full weight of their legal operations to bear on the small file-swapping companies, stretching the resources of the start-ups to a breaking point. Moreover, squabbling between StreamCast and Kazaa BV has badly weakened the defendants' case.

StreamCast attorney Andrew Bridges, a partner with high-profile Palo Alto, Calif., law firm Wilson Soncini Goodrich & Rosati, said Wednesday that he is withdrawing from the case and that StreamCast is seeking new counsel. Bridges was one of the lead attorneys who successfully defended Diamond Multimedia against claims by the Recording Industry Association of America (news - web sites) (RIAA) that the original Rio MP3 player violated copyright law.

"I've been informed by my client that they cannot sustain the burn rate for legal fees," Bridges said.

In its own court filing Friday, Kazaa BV said it could not afford to continue the case and that it would accept a default judgment. That could put the two-person company on the hook for damages in the millions or tens of millions of dollars, forcing it out of business altogether.

"Simply put, plaintiffs have run Kazaa out of business," Kazaa BV's attorneys said in their court filing. "Accordingly, Kazaa has asked plaintiffs for their terms of surrender."

An attorney for Grokster, the third file-swapping company in the Kazaa BV lawsuit, could not be reached for comment.

Kazaa BV sold the actual Kazaa file-swapping software to a Vanuatu-based company called Sharman Networks in February. It maintained control of the underlying peer-to-peer technology, called FastTrack.

Despite their court filing, Kazaa BV's founders already appear to be licensing the FastTrack technology through another company. According to documents filed with federal regulators in the United States, a company called Blastoise--owned and operated by the Kazaa BV founders--has already licensed the FastTrack technology to a Los Angeles company named Brilliant Digital Entertainment.

According to those documents filed April 1, Blastoise--operating under the name Joltid--licensed the FastTrack technology to a Brilliant Digital subsidiary called Altnet, whose software contains the core of a new peer-to-peer network. Blastoise also took a 49 percent stake in Altnet, according to the filing.

Sharman, which now provides the actual Kazaa file-swapping software, also plans to continue using the FastTrack technology. A Sharman representative said the company had been assured that the license to the technology would continue even if the Kazaa BV company goes under. Sharman, which has seen tens of millions of people download the Kazaa software since the company acquired it in February, has not yet been sued.

Executives from the RIAA said that Kazaa, Sharman and the other parties were simply trying to evade judgment by shifting corporate assets between different companies.

"They're playing an international shell game, trying to make a mockery of the judicial process," said Matt Oppenheim, senior vice president for the RIAA.

A trial date is scheduled for October 1, although the current round of difficulties could change that.

Sharman released its own new version of the Kazaa file-swapping software Wednesday. It includes the first portions of the Altnet network, which will sprinkle paid search results into ordinary Kazaa searches, as well as a few new security features.

=~::~~==

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.